THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.
JOINT SUBSIDIARY PLANS DIVISION

SECRET

SPDM-410-54
26 November 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. CHARLES A. SULLIVAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS:

Subject: Air Force Prisoners of War in Communist Hands.

1. On 12 January 1953, at 1720 hours, a B-29, commanded by Colonel John K. Arnold (Commander, 581st Air Resupply and Communications Wing) was dispatched from Nakota Air Base, Japan, to conduct leaflet operations in North Korea. Assigned targets for the mission were the North Korean cities of Pakchon, Puckchin, Kusong, Sonchon, Charyongway and Chalsan. The expected time of return from the flight was 0130, 13 January. The aircraft and crew were from the 581st Air Resupply and Communications Wing, 13th Air Force, based at Clark Air Force Base, Philippine Islands, operating from Yakota Air Base, Japan.

2. The last contact with the crew of the B-29 was the sighting by friendly radar at approximately 2310 hours. "Mayday" was called by the aircraft commander at 2316. The radar operators reported seeing the B-29 attacked by 12 fighters. The aircraft disappeared from the radar scope shortly after. Its last location was approximately 15 miles south of the Yalu River, near the North Korean city of Sonchon. (see Enclosure "A")

3. Propaganda broadcasts from Radio Peking on 21 January admitted the capture or three of the crew members (Arnold, Baumer and Vandi, accusing them of having "intruded over neutral Manchuria." Using this evidence that there were survivors not repatriated, the United Nations Military Armistice Commission, demanded an accounting of the USAF personnel believed held by the Communists. Five separate demands were made between 9 September 1953 and 17 August 1954. No satisfactory replies were received. The Chinese made no further admissions.

4. In May 1954 an attempt was made to negotiate through the British at Peiping for the release of eighteen USAF personnel held by the Communists with no success. Direct negotiation with the Chinese at Geneva in June 1954 elicited an admission that the Communists were holding fifteen "political prisoners" and that three of the B-29 crew members (see Enclosure "C") had died on 13 January. Negotiations for the release of the 15 were unsuccessful.

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5. In September 1954, the International Committee of the Red Cross requested an accounting of prisoners held by the Chinese. Shortly after these negotiations began, mail was permitted to be sent by the B-29 crew. The first letter began to arrive in late October. As of this date, letters have been received from all surviving members of the crew. One crew member, Airman 2d Class Thompson, was permitted to send a recent letter which contained the crudely coded message, "Landed Korea to China Train." It is possible that other letters received contain less obvious messages. Efforts to determine whether this is the case are being made at this time.

6. State Department officials have presumed that the Communists intended using the USAF prisoners of war and others being held in order to:

a. Force U. S. negotiation at the highest level.

b. Continue propaganda in the attempt to discredit and weaken the Central Intelligence Agency.

c. Continue propaganda linking U.S. and Chaing Kai Shek and discrediting both in Asia.

d. Obtain entry to United Nations.

e. Develop justification for overt military acts in the future.

7. On 23 November, broadcasts from Radio Peiping announced that the Arnold crew had been "tried" before a military tribunal of the Supreme Peoples Court of China. Sentences handed down by the tribunal condemned the crew members as "American spies who jeopardized the security of China." The penalties ranged from four to 10 years, corresponding to the rank of the individual. (See enclosure "B").

8. The above information has been furnished from available sources within the DoD over the holiday period and is at present being reverified.

SIGNED

Miriam C. Young,
Brigadier General, USAF,
Chief.

SECRET

ENCLOSURE "A"

FLIGHT PLAN B-29 COMMANDED

by

Colonel Arnold 12/1/53

Departed Yakota, 1720 (International time), 12 Jan 53, Leaflet Operations.

Course based on World Aeronautical Chart. O'Shina, Japan Nagoya, Japan, Mineyma, Japan (Homen radio). Coast inpoint ES 0370 to be at 2100, then to Pakchon YE 2100, to Puckchin at YE 3453 to Kusong XE 9228, Sonchon, XE 6407, Chanyongway XE 4712 to Cholsan, XE 4301, to YB 0787, then to Coast out ES 0370 and return to Yakota. Estimated time of arrival Yakota 0130 I. Mayday at 2316 I in XE YE area 12 Bogies, disappeared XE 6050.

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Captain Eugene J. Vaadi, AO-825008, Aircraft Commander,
DOB 1 July 1921
(Sentence - 6 years)
Wife: Mrs. Mary E. Vaadi
Route #1
Clayton, New York

1st Lt John W. Buck, AO-787245, Aircraft Observer,
DOB 21 February 1919
(Sentence - 4 years)
Parents: Mr. and Mrs. Noah A. Buck
Armathwaite, Tennessee

1st Lt Wallace L. Brown, AO-2221928, Pilot,
DOB 21 September 1926 (Sentence 5 years)
Wife: Mrs. Bobby J. Brown
304 National Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama

T/Sgt Howard W. Brown, AF-36809947, Flight Engineer,
DOB 11 December 1922
(Sentence - 4 years)
Parents: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Brown
1712 Conway Street
St Paul 6, Minnesota

Airman 1st Class Steve E. Kiba, AF-15426310, Radio
Operator, DOB 5 Feb 32
(Sentence - 4 years)
Parents: Mr. and Mrs. Steve Kiba
659 Robin Street
Akron, Ohio

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Enclosure "B"

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ENCLOSURE "B"

Arnold Crew Members Missing in Action as of 13 January 1953

Colonel John K. Arnold, 1212A, Commander, 581st Air Resupply and Communications Wing, DOB 24 September 1913
(Sentence - 10 years)
Wife: Mrs. John K. Arnold
8 National Street
Montgomery, Alabama

Brother: Dr. Robert Arnold
8709 Sundale Drive
Silver Spring, Maryland

Major William H. Baumer, AO-733788, Instructor Pilot, DOB 22 April 1922
(Sentence - 8 years)
Mother: Mrs. Mary E. Baumer
124 St. Anthony Street
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Sister: Alice Ion Moore
R.D. #1 - Box 709A
Centerville Road
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Captain Elmer F. Llewellyn, AO-2072360, Navigator, DOB 19 August 1925
(Sentence - 5 years)
Wife: Mrs. Marjorie G. Llewellyn
308 South 6th Street East
Missoula, Montana

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Airman 2d Class Harry M. Benjamin, Jr., AF-27345828,
Scanner, DOB 15 May 1932
(Sentence - 4 years)
Wife: Mrs. Charlene A. Benjamin
1124 Sherwood Street
Worthington, Minnesota

Airman 2d Class Daniel C. Schmidt, AF-19391475, Central
Fire Control Gunner, DOB 28 March 1932
(Sentence - 4 years)
Wife: Mrs. Una F. Schmidt
7346 S.E. Harrison Street
Portland 16, Oregon
(25 Nov 54; c/o Wolf Motel, Redding,
California)

Airman 2d Class John W. Thompson, III, AF-13351709,
Scanner, DOB 15 August 1931
(Sentence - 4 years)
Parents: Mrs. John W. Thompson, Jr.
146 Caroline Street
Orange, Virginia

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ENCLOSURE "C"

Arnold Crew Members Determined Dead as of
9 August 1954

1st Lt Paul E. VanVoorhis, AO-2091867, Radar Operator,
DOB 17 March 1920

Wife: Mrs Dorothy B. VanVoorhis
137-25 96th Street
Ozone Park, Long Island, N. Y.

1st Lt Henry D. Weese, AO-2091871, Radar Operator,
DOB 14 September 1924

Wife: Mrs Dorothy Mae Weese
255 East 18th Street
San Bernardino, California

Airman 1st Class Alvin D. Hart, Jr., AF-16353684, Gunner,
DOB 7 December 1931

Parents: Mr and Mrs Alvin D. Hart, Sr.
2459 Benjamin Street
Saginaw, Michigan